

# GREY ART NYU GALLERY

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## New Perspectives on French Art in U.S. Collections

*Storied Past: Four Centuries of French Drawings  
from the Blanton Museum of Art*  
and *French Art from NYU's Collection*

open at NYU's Grey Art Gallery on April 17, 2012

New York City (February 6, 2012)—Throughout history artists have sought new and innovative ways to tell stories through visual means. *Storied Past: Four Centuries of French Drawings from the Blanton Museum of Art*, on view at New York University's Grey Art Gallery from April 17 through July 14, 2012, presents French perspectives on dramatic narrative from the 16th through 19th centuries. Biblical, historical, mythological, and contemporary characters abound in drawings by artists such as Jacques Callot, François Boucher, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-Louis Forain, and Théophile Alexandre Steinlen. Organized by the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin, the exhibition features more than 50 works and reveals the expressive and technical range of French drawing through preliminary sketches, compositional studies, figure studies, and finished drawings. A companion exhibition, *French Art from NYU's Collection*, will be on view in the Grey's Lower Level Gallery.

*Storied Past* traces shifts in French drawing, exploring the role of the Academy, the influence of Italian art, and the development of distinctive tastes in style and subject matter. Particularly strong are examples from the 17th and 18th centuries—a period when the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) in Paris



Charles-Antoine Coypel, *France Thanking Heaven for the Recovery of Louis XV*, 1744. Black and white chalks with brush and gray wash and touches of red chalk on cream antique laid paper. 11 15/16 x 7 7/8 in. The Suida-Manning Collection

became one of the most dominant cultural and political institutions in Europe. The Académie de France (French Academy), founded in 1666 in Rome, provided French art students an opportunity to live in the ancient city, a mecca of artistic experimentation and patronage. There they encountered the dramatic and dynamic paintings of the Italian Baroque, which provided an alternative approach to the Royal Academy's formal, rational tradition. Italy's allure permeates much of the aesthetics and subject matter on view in *Storied Past*. Classical iconography proliferates—Venus and Cupid luxuriate among river gods, Neptune commands the seas, and Hercules arrives triumphantly at Mount Olympus.

The social and political landscape of 19th-century France dramatically altered the course of not only French drawing but also French art in general. During this period of industrial and artistic transformation, many artists abandoned idealism and classicism for realist approaches. Scenes of everyday life took precedence over the previously popular religious and heroic themes. Examples of this shift include Jean-Louis Forain's shadowy family portrait, A. Belloquet's political caricature, and Théophile Alexandre Steinlen's street scene drawn for the cover of an operetta likely performed at the infamous Montmartre cabaret *Le Chat Noir*.

The “storied past” of the exhibition title refers not only to the narrative subjects favored by French artists but also to the individual stories of the objects and the collection itself. Extensive research by the exhibition's curators and conservators sheds new light on the drawings, many of which have never before been published. *Storied Past* also offers a peek into collecting practices, revealing the taste of William Suida, who, in Austria in the early 20th century, procured nearly all of the drawings that comprise the Suida-Manning Collection—which was acquired by The Blanton in 1998. Suida, we see, prioritized Italianate over French styles, the 17th century over the 18th century, and academic tradition over radicalism. He amassed an array of quickly sketched figure studies as well as highly finished compositions that map out subsequent paintings, and drawings destined directly for the market. The collection also includes a variety of artistic materials (ink, chalk, graphite, gouache, and watercolor) and mark-making styles, ranging from vigorous gestural contours to softly modeled chiaroscuro.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Cheryl K. Snay, curator of European art, Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame; Jonathan Bober, curator of Old Master prints, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and Kenneth M. Grant, paper conservator, Harry Ransom Center. Snay discusses the role of drawing in France from 1500 to 1900, Bober explores the history of the Suida-Manning Collection, and Grant offers

technical analysis of several works, unearthing new information about the creation and functions of the drawings. The catalogue is co-published by Hudson Hills Press. *Storied Past* will also travel to the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, from May 28 to August 24, 2014.

Concurrently on view with *Storied Past* is ***French Art from NYU's Collection***. Curated by **Lynn Gumpert**, director of the Grey Art Gallery, it showcases works by French artists from New York University's art collection. Spanning the 19th and 20th centuries, this exhibition provides an opportunity to view paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and sculpture from the university's holdings, including several works that were among the first donated upon the collection's founding in 1958. "The New York University Art Collection deserves more widespread recognition," notes Gumpert. "Interestingly, it was inspired by the pioneering efforts of A. E. Gallatin, who had founded the Gallery (later Museum) of Living Art. Occupying the future premises of the Grey Art Gallery from 1927 to 1942, it was the first New York museum to collect and show major paintings by French artists such as Georges Braque, Francis Picabia, Sonia Delaunay, and others. We're very pleased to offer this introduction to the NYU Collection's French works."

### **Public Programs:**

Note: Programs are free of charge, no reservations, capacity is limited. Photo ID required for entrance to NYU buildings. Information: [www.nyu.edu/greyart](http://www.nyu.edu/greyart), [greyartgallery@nyu.edu](mailto:greyartgallery@nyu.edu), or 212/998-6780. All events are subject to change. For email updates visit the Grey's website and click on "join our listserv."

### **Gallery Talk**

Wednesday, April 18, 6:30 pm  
Grey Art Gallery, NYU, 100 Washington Square East

With **Delia Solomons**, Graduate Curatorial Assistant, Grey Art Gallery, and PhD Candidate, Institute of Fine Arts, NYU.

### **Drawing as Process in French Art**

Thursday, April 26, 7:00 pm  
La Maison Française, 16 Washington Mews (at University Place)

Exploring drawing's crucial role in the development of paintings, sculptures, and other objects, **Laura Auricchio**, Associate Professor of Art History, Parsons The New School for Design, will discuss how selected drawings in *Storied Past* point both backward, to the artist's initial concept, and forward to the final work.

## **Gallery Talk**

Wednesday, May 2, 6:30 pm

Grey Art Gallery, NYU, 100 Washington Square East

**John Torreano**, Professor of Art and Art Professions, NYU, and author of *Drawing by Seeing* (Abrams, 2007), will focus on the graphic techniques included in the exhibition.

## **Sponsorship:**

*Storied Past: Four Centuries of French Drawings from the Blanton Museum of Art* and its accompanying full-color catalogue were organized by the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin. Support for the exhibition is provided by United Airlines and the Still Water Foundation. Additional funding for the presentation at the Grey Art Gallery is provided by the Grey's Director's Circle, Inter/National Council, and Friends; and the Abby Weed Grey Trust.

## **About the Grey Art Gallery:**

The Grey Art Gallery is New York University's fine-arts museum, located on historic Washington Square Park in New York City's Greenwich Village. It offers the NYU community and the general public a dynamic roster of engaging and thought-provoking exhibitions, all of them enriched by public programs. With its emphasis on experimentation and interpretation, and its focus on exploring art in its historical, cultural, and social contexts, the Grey serves as a museum-laboratory for the exploration of art's environments.

Exhibitions organized by the Grey have encompassed all the visual arts: painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking, photography, architecture and decorative arts, video, film, and performance. In addition to producing its own exhibitions, which often travel to other venues in the United States and abroad, the Gallery hosts traveling shows that might otherwise not be seen in New York and produces scholarly publications that are distributed worldwide.

## **General Information:**

Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 100 Washington Square East, New York, NY 10003

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E-mail: [greyartgallery@nyu.edu](mailto:greyartgallery@nyu.edu)

Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/greyart>

## **Hours:**

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 11 am–6 pm

**OPEN LATE** Wednesday: 11 am–8 pm

Saturday: 11 am–5 pm

Sunday, Monday, and major holidays: Closed

**Admission:** Suggested donation: \$3; NYU students, faculty, and staff: free of charge

## **About the Blanton Museum of Art:**

The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin is one of the foremost university art museums in the country and has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas. The museum welcomes and engages all visitors by offering extraordinary experiences that connect art and ideas. The Blanton's permanent collection of more than 17,000 works is recognized for its European paintings, an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, and modern and contemporary American and Latin American art.